

Ministerial Conduct

ment, on various occasions matters were referred to the committee on privileges and elections, and that was never done following specific charges concerning the responsibility of an hon. member.

After all, we are not asking that a charge be laid but that explanations be given on certain points. A charge may be laid later if necessary—and I repeat “if necessary”—and if the investigation should reveal certain irregularities.

But for the time being our purpose is to get some explanations and not to lay charges, because I do not question the integrity of the ministers involved.

[Text]

Mr. Lamontagne: Mr. Speaker, because of the things which have already been said on the substance of this so-called issue I hope you will allow me as a matter of privilege to make a very brief statement.

Mr. Speaker: May I suggest we try to reach a decision on the question before me. Then if the minister has any question of privilege to raise, he can raise it.

Mr. Lamontagne: A lot of things have been allowed to be said on the substance of this matter, and since I am directly involved I think I should be allowed to make a very brief statement.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Chair does not wish to prevent, and will not prevent, the minister making a statement at the right time; he can always rise on a question of privilege and make his statement. But I have a specific matter to deal with, and I should like to deal with it first. Then if the minister wishes to make a statement I cannot see any particular harm in his doing so.

Hon. G. J. McIlraith (President of the Privy Council): The difficulty as I see it is that the Leader of the Opposition rose and made extensive remarks after the hon. member for Pictou had proposed his motion. In the course of those remarks he dealt in a somewhat extensive way with the whole subject matter.

Mr. Diefenbaker: No.

Mr. McIlraith: Well, that is a matter of record. What was said is recorded in *Hansard*, so let us not get into a controversy here about it. However, having been permitted to make those extensive remarks—

Mr. Grégoire: I was not permitted.

[Mr. Grégoire.]

Mr. McIlraith: The hon. member for La-pointe was not permitted to make the same kind of extensive remarks. Surely the minister directly involved should, in the circumstances, be permitted to make the same extended remarks as the right hon. gentleman, and he should be allowed to make them as a right, not as a privilege or by a concession of the house. He should be allowed as a right to make remarks exactly in the same context and at the same point in our proceedings. We cannot have a situation where one set of interpretation is permitted for one hon. member and another for another. Surely, since he is directly involved, the minister is entitled to be heard on this point with exactly the same interpretation placed on the latitude for his remarks as was placed on those of the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Burnaby-Coquitlam): Mr. Speaker, on the point of order that has been raised by the Secretary of State, I agree that the minister should be heard; he should be allowed to make a full statement. But I point out to Your Honour that the substance of the matter has already been dealt with both by the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition, and the only way the minister can make a statement is for Your Honour to allow the motion.

Mr. Pickersgill: Not at all.

Mr. Douglas: It seems to me that having allowed two speakers, if Your Honour allows the minister to make a statement on the substance of the matter Your Honour will have in effect allowed the motion. In my view, to have the minister make a statement and then for Your Honour to rule that the motion is not relevant and deny anyone else the opportunity of making a statement would be most improper. It seems to me that having allowed the debate to go this far, Your Honour has really no alternative but to allow the motion and let the debate proceed.

Hon. J. W. Pickersgill (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, in relation to the point of order raised by my colleague and spoken to by the hon. member for Burnaby-Coquitlam, I wonder whether I could suggest that a factual statement by the two ministers concerned is absolutely essential at this point in order that Your Honour may have the opportunity to determine whether there is any urgency of debate.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.